

NEED ANALYSIS RESEARCH PROJECT #NR 172-363

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Wesleyan University

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Annual Technical Report

A good deal of our time during the past year was spent in completing The Achievement Motive for publication in December by Appleton-Century-Crofts. It represents a summary of our research roughly through the end of 1952. It is our hope and expectation that the data presented in this book and the method of measuring motivation used in it will serve to stimulate other investigators to speed up their efforts to understand human motivation. We believe that our research has opened the way for a more rapid advance in the accumulation of knowledge about human motivation, an advance which will have far-reaching effects both in personnel practices and in understanding the work situations which elicit the most efficient kind of performance from different types of individuals.

While we were busy writing up our previous research in book form, we were at the same time starting a number of new projects, many of which have now advanced to the stage where they can usefully be summarized here. One line of investigation dealt with the relation of achievement motivation to society. McClelland and Kaltenbach in a paper entitled Achievement and Social Status in Three Small Communities reported that community service is the activity most closely associated with "success" in small communities, and that people with high achievement motivation participate significantly more frequently in community affairs. This

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represents one attempt to find out what channels achievement motivation flows into in modern society. Another project pursued the hypothesis advanced by Max Weber over 50 years ago to the effect that the Protestant ethic is closely associated with the development of modern economic institutions. Close analysis suggested that the Protestant ethic was such as to favor early independence training and high achievement motivation. This suggested in turn that economic development might be the result of high achievement motivation plus certain other beliefs as to the relevance of economic activity to "progress" or bringing about a better world. This hypothesis really involved several discrete steps, the first of which was taken during the past year when it was shown that Protestant and Jewish families expect earlier independence on the part of their children than do Catholic families. This study will be issued in preliminary form as a Technical Report soon. It is expected during the coming year that the consequences of the stress on early independence training, both for achievement motivation and for participation in economic activities, will be followed up to provide further empirical checks on Weber's hypothesis. Of special interest is a study now in the planning stage of the attitude of Japanese-American parents towards independence in their children since the hypothesis in its general form should apply not only to Protestants and Jews but to any parents who, for whatever reason, encourage individual initiative early in their children.

A second line of investigation involved further attempts to measure the effects of achievement motivation on behavior. H.W. Wendt's paper entitled Achievement Motivation and the Problem of Energy Mobilization

and Fatigue has been circulated as a Technical Report. Its chief contributions were to show 1) that high achievement motivation led to better performance in a simple arithmetic task, as had been previously shown by Lowell, 2) that this superiority was most marked when the subjects were working under "unscheduled" conditions with little external pressure for working hard, and 3) that the subjects with higher achievement motivation, who had actually done more work, seemed to be less bored or fatigued and to show less of a drop in critical flicker fusion frequency which may be taken as a physiological index of some central "energy level" factor. In short, as previously indicated, achievement motivation should be a good way of picking those men who will work hard regardless of outside pressure and whose attentiveness and performance will, by and large, be better than those who score lower on the n Achievement test. Another study dealt with the ability of subjects with high and low achievement motivation to remember the content of material which they had written or which had been read to them. Once again, it was found that in general subjects with high achievement motivation had better memory for content than those with low achievement motivation, although the subjects with moderately high motivation seemed to remember best of all except when the material contained a good many references to "success". These results were interpreted as consistent with earlier results which have shown that the middle n Achievement group tends to be primarily motivated to avoid failure and tries, therefore, somewhat anxiously to keep many details of content in mind, unless those details refer to success.

A third line of investigation has continued explorations of differ-

ent types of achievement motivation. For example, we have known for some time that subjects who describe themselves as strongly motivated for achievement are not necessarily the ones with high n Achievement scores obtained from projective material. The question then arises, how do these people differ from those who score high on our n Achievement test? A report is just in the process of being completed which tends to show that those with high self-descriptive n Achievement tend to be individuals who are more readily influenced by authorities with some claim to expert knowledge and who, somewhat like our middle n Achievement group, tend to be more impressed by the unsuccessful characteristics of a person than by his successful characteristics. In short, our preliminary evidence indicates that those who feel they are ambitious, achievement individuals, tend to be more conformist and more concerned about lack of success than they are about doing a good job for its own sake, a characteristic which seems to be central to those with high n Achievement scores in our standard test situation.

Sex differences in achievement motivation have also continued to engage our attention. So far we have been unable to increase the amount of achievement imagery that women write in their stories as a result of the standard experimental procedures for arousing achievement motivation in men. We tested the hypothesis that this might be due to the fact that we had never yet used pictures of women in career situations as cues for eliciting the stories. So we repeated our basic experiment using college women with standard neutral instructions and achievement-orienting instructions and three different types of picture cues--the standard "male"

slides, slides involving females in non-career situations, and slides with females in career situations. Once again we failed to get an increase in achievement imagery as a result of experimental arousal of achievement motivation. Furthermore, we found that the achievement imagery written to the male slides and to the "general" female slides tended to co-vary in the same individuals while both were completely unrelated to the achievement imagery written in response to the career female slides. Furthermore, there was considerable outside evidence which showed that the n Achievement score for the male and "general" female slides was a valid index of achievement motivation since it correlated significantly with such variables as office-holding, performance in a laboratory task, and grades in school, whereas the n Achievement score to the career female slides was uncorrelated with any of these variables. So, even though we cannot arouse achievement motivation in women for reasons as yet not entirely understood, it seems clear that their n Achievement score, in response to standard male pictures, will provide a valid index of their motivation as it expresses itself in the usual behavioral measures of performance and the like.

Finally, we have begun to see some light in our long series of studies referred to in previous reports on the sub-types of achievement motivation characterized as involving "hope of success" or "fear of failure". Dr. R. A. Clark in collaboration with Dr. Henry Ricciuti and Mr. Richard Teevan have in preparation a Technical Report entitled An Investigation of the Hope of Success and Fear of Failure Aspects of Need for Achievement in which the n Achievement characteristics are studied

and compared of individuals who typically set conservative vs. optimistic levels of aspiration. That is, subjects who set optimistic levels of aspiration may be thought of as persons with strong hopes of success, whereas those who are conservative may be thought of as fearing failure. It appears that the n Achievement scores of individuals classified in this way vary as to total and as to sub-type of achievement imagery, particularly when it is classified as to whether it is generally positive or negative. Previous attempts to make sense out of these data appear to have failed because experimental modifications of the scoring system had been used in the analysis which had not been sufficiently validated. The current re-analysis is done in terms of the original scoring system now published in The Achievement Motive.

Training At least four first-rate graduate students--R. deCharms, W. Morrison, W. Reitman, and R. Teevan--have received research training in connection with the contract during the past year. In my view this still represents one of the major contributions that the research contract makes, since these students get an excellent first-hand experience with on-going research.

Reports of research either completed or in preparation are listed below:

McClelland, D.C., Atkinson, J.W., Clark, R.A., and Lowell, E.L.
The achievement motive. Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953.
Pp 384, xxii.

Wendt, H.W. Achievement motivation and the problem of energy mobilization and fatigue. Technical report, 1953.

- McClelland, D.C., Rindlistbacher, A., and deCharms, R. Religious and other sources of parental attitudes toward independence training. Technical report (in preparation), 1954.
- McClelland, D.C. and deCharms, R. A comparison of individuals with high self-descriptive and high projective n Achievement. Technical report (in preparation), 1954.
- Clark, R.A., Ricciuti, H. and Teevan, R. An investigation of the hope of success and fear of failure aspects of need for achievement. Technical report (in preparation), 1954.